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ABSTRACT

A survey of the New York Department of Correctional Services Vocational Education Program was conducted in 53 correctional facilities throughout the state, with a questionnaire measuring perceptions of staff and inmates about the effectiveness of the program in the areas of work skills, technical skills, and student personal attributes relating to employability. Respondents included 430 educational supervisors and instructors as well as 389 randomly sampled inmates who were within 6 months of their release dates. The findings revealed that both inmates and staff thought that the program was useful in improving interpersonal skills as well as employment skills. They also generally agreed that the program was helpful in effectively preparing inmates for employment after release from prison. A significant proportion of both groups stated that more hands-on work and in-house projects were needed to better prepare inmates for employment. Respondents also noted the need to keep equipment and materials updated and the need for computer training. Instructors stated that more programming involving job-seeking skills as well as increased academics were needed. They also saw a need for better screening and placement procedures for inmates. The study concluded that the program should continue to be strengthened in the areas of computer repair, software, and computer literacy and that the employment success of former inmates who participated in the program should be studied. (KC)

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# State of New York

## Department of Correctional Services

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# PERCEPTIONS OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE NYS DOCS 1998

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## PERCEPTIONS OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

### Executive Summary

A survey of the Department of Correctional Services Vocational Education Program was conducted in 53 correctional facilities throughout New York State. The questionnaire was designed to measure perceptions of staff and inmates regarding the effectiveness of the program. Respondents consisted of 430 educational supervisors and instructors as well as 389 randomly sampled inmates who were within six months of their release date. Ten percent of the inmate sample were women.

The survey measured the effectiveness of the program in regard to work skills, technical skills, and student personal attributes relating to employability. Inmate chances of obtaining successful employment once released into the community and the overall quality of specific programs based on inmate and staff perceptions were also measured. Also examined were the most positive components of the program as well as changes needed to improve the program, as perceived by the respondents.

Findings revealed that both inmates and staff thought that the program was useful in improving interpersonal skills as well as employment skills. They also generally agreed that the program was helpful in effectively preparing inmates for employment after release from prison.

A significant proportion of inmates as well as staff stated that more hands-on work and in-house projects were needed to better prepare inmates for employment. The need to keep equipment and materials updated was also highlighted by both staff and inmates. They saw the need, as well, for training in the computer field.

Instructors stated that more programming involving job seeking skills such as résumé writing and interviewing, as well as increased academics such as basic math and reading, were needed. They also saw a need for better screening and placement procedures for inmates. The inmates focused on making the program more career oriented and decreasing transfers out of shops before they had completed their training.

# PERCEPTIONS OF THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

## I. Introduction

The mission of vocational education is to offer inmates a program that provides training that will enhance the occupational skills of participants. This training is seen as an opportunity for students to improve their employment potential and their ability to function in a noncriminal fashion. Instructors focus on providing students with the attitudes, knowledge, skills and credentials needed to contribute to facility maintenance or to work in the Department of Correctional Services Industry Program while incarcerated and, even more importantly, to secure employment when released back into the community.

A description and exploratory study of vocational programs in the New York State Department of Correctional Services was completed in May of 1997.[1] That study sought to answer the question: How does vocational education operate in the New York State Department of Correctional Services and does this program make a difference?

The report provided: (1) an overview of the Vocational Education Program in the Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) - its mission, objectives, target population, current available vocational trades, relationship to the academic education program, and impact on participants and the Department; (2) a brief description of a preliminary study of vocational job titles earned by students and its impact on recidivism; and (3) future plans for ways to measure the impact of the Vocational Education Program in the Department.

As a followup to that report, one of the plans for further study was to do a qualitative assessment of the experiences of vocational instructors and students. It was hoped that this investigation would give researchers and program staff a better understanding of the process of vocational education, how it is received by participants, and perhaps, how effective vocational education is in achieving its mission.

To that end, a questionnaire was sent to all vocational supervisors and instructors, and to a sample of students in vocational programs in January of 1998.[2]

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1 Vocational Programs: Description and Exploratory Study. State of New York Department of Correctional Services, 1997.

2 At any one time there are approximately 10,000 inmates participating in the vocational program. Therefore a random sample of inmates was taken. Those inmates participating in a vocational program who were within three months of their parole date were selected for the random sample. It was thought that inmates closer to parole would have participated longer in a vocational program. Approximately 30% of the male inmates in this category were selected. All female inmates in this category were selected because of the small number of females in the inmate population. Of the 389 in the sample, 38 (10%) were female, which is double their percentage in the total population.

## II. Description of Survey

Two versions of the survey were written - one for inmates and one for instructors and supervisors. The two versions consisted of similar questions regarding perceptions of the Vocational Education Program, but differed in regard to information particular to inmates and staff such as the types of jobs inmates expected to receive once released. For a copy of both staff and inmate surveys, see Appendix A.

There were 475 inmate surveys and 487 instructor/supervisor surveys sent to 53 facilities offering vocational services, for a total of 962 surveys. Three hundred eighty-nine (389) inmate surveys were returned (82%) and 430 instructor/supervisor surveys were returned (88%). Of this number, 47 were supervisors and 383 were instructors. For a breakdown of surveys by facility, see Appendix B.

## III. Description of Respondents

Inmate Respondents. Of the inmate participants, 90% were students; 7% aides; and 3% clerks in the vocational programs included in the study. Their average age was 32 years. The average length of time served in state prison was two years, five months. The median time was one year, seven months. The average length of time they had spent in their current vocational program was eight months, though the median time was only five months.

Twenty-six percent (26%) had a reading or math score below 5.0. Another 25% had both reading and math scores above 8.0. The others fell somewhere in between. Their average TABE grade equivalent reading score was 8.3; math was 6.9. Forty-one percent (41%) had acquired a GED (High School Equivalency diploma). The dominant language of 94% of the students was English; 5% were Spanish dominant.

Inmates surveyed were in 30 different vocational programs. The highest number were in Custodial Maintenance (55) and Horticulture/Agriculture (36). (See Appendix C for a complete list of vocational shops and the number of students in each shop.) These inmates reported that 53% of them had earned a total of 206 job titles in their current vocational program. Fifty-five percent (55%) of the men had earned at least one job title and 41% of the women had earned at least one job title in their current program. Appendix E shows the number of job titles earned.

Table I below gives a summary of demographics of inmates surveyed:

**Table I. Inmates: Number of responses and demographic data**

| Inmates | Number of Responses |
|---|---|
| Students | 350 (90%) |
| Aides | 29 (7%) |
| Clerks | 10 (3%) |
| TOTAL | 389 351 men (90%); 38 women (10%) |
| Average Age: 32 | |
| Average Time in Current Vocational Program: 8 months | |
| Average Time Incarcerated: 2 years, 5 months | |
| Number with degree (High School Equivalency or higher): 158 (41%) | |
| Average Read Score: 8.3 - Median Read Score: 8.4 (N=365) | |
| Average Math Score: 6.9 - Median Math Score: 6.4 (N=357) | |
| Number with one or more vocational job titles: 206 (53%) | |

Staff Respondents. The length of time staff had taught in the vocational program ranged from 2 months to 32 years. The average length of time instructors had taught in the vocational education program was 11 years, while the average length of time instructors had taught at their current facility was 8 1/4 years.

The most common trades that respondents taught were Building Maintenance (42), Custodial Maintenance (40), and Electrical Trades (30). (See Appendix D for a complete list of trades with the number of instructors.) These statistics are described in Table II.

**Table II. Staff: Number of responses and average time worked**

| Staff | Number of Responses | Average Time Worked |
|---|---|---|
| Supervisors | 47 (11%) | 10.5 Years |
| Instructors | 383 (89%) | 11 Years (8.25 yrs at current facility) |
| TOTAL | 430 | 11 Years (From 2 months to 32 years) |

## IV. Findings - Staff and Inmate Responses

The inmate survey consisted of eight questions while the staff survey had six



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questions. The survey questions, slightly rephrased, are written in italics in the report.

Two questions in the survey were asked of both staff and inmates. The first question asked respondents to rate *how they thought vocational training helped inmates* in seven different areas. The areas were:

- Teaches technical skills
- Teaches job readiness
- Provides opportunities for inmates to make use of their academic skills
- Helps build work skills
- Helps build interpersonal skills
- Helps build self-esteem
- Helps develop a cooperative spirit

Respondents could choose among four responses: Doesn't help, Helps a little, Helps somewhat, Helps a lot. In the following table, responses indicating that vocational training 'helps somewhat' or 'helps a lot' were combined as percentages of the total number of respondents who answered the question.

**Table III. In what ways do you feel vocational training is helpful to inmates?**

| Ways it helps | Staff Response | Male Inmate Response | Female Inmate Response | Total Inmate Response |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) Teaches technical skills | 422 (98%)* | 334 (98%) | 34 (94%) | 368 (97%) |
| 2) Teaches job readiness | 409 (95%) | 317 (95%) | 36 (97%) | 353 (95%) |
| 3) Provides opportunity to use academic skills | 385 (90%) | 297 (89%) | 34 (94%) | 331 (89%) |
| 4) Helps build work skills | 405 (94%) | 319 (93%) | 36 (100%) | 355 (94%) |
| 5) Builds interpersonal skills | 388 (90%) | 311 (91%) | 34 (97%) | 345 (92%) |
| 6) Helps build self-esteem | 412 (96%) | 303 (89%) | 33 (94%) | 336 (90%) |
| 7) Helps build cooperative spirit | 384 (90%) | 305 (91%) | 34 (97%) | 339 (92%) |

**Number saying it helps somewhat or helps a lot. Percents based on total responses to each question.*

All of the positive staff response rates were above 90%, showing that most instructors and supervisors perceive vocational training to increase inmate personal skills as well as work skills. Inmate responses were similarly positive, though they were less likely than staff to think that the program helps build self-esteem (90% vs. 96%). The table also shows that female students were generally more positive than male students in their evaluation of the

program except for the first statement, "teaches technical skills." Other ways vocational training helped that inmates listed were: better thinking skills, pride in self sufficiency, good use of idle time, and stress relief. The most frequent staff responses to other ways vocational training helped were: gives inmates confidence in themselves and pride in their work; gives them marketable skills; and reduces idle time.

The second question for both staff and inmates was to rate a series of statements having to do with *vocational training and employability*. The six statements were:

- Vocational training will help inmates get jobs in the community.
- Current vocational offerings are appropriate for the types of jobs inmates can apply for once in the community.
- Inmates who receive vocational training are less likely to return to prison.
- Inmates are likely to get a job in their trade.
- The majority of inmates participating in vocational programs receive enough training and experience to obtain a community job in a particular vocational trade.
- The 'live work' aspect of vocational training is important for developing skills.

The response choices were on a five point scale: strongly disagree, slightly disagree, not sure, somewhat agree, strongly agree. Table IV shows the number and percentage of staff and students who somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statements.

**Table IV. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

| Statement | Staff Response | Male Inmate Response | Female Inmate Response | Total Inmate Response |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) Vocational training will help inmates get jobs in the community | 345 (81%)* | 290 (84%) | 32 (89%) | 322 (84%) |
| 2) Current vocational offerings are appropriate for the jobs inmates can apply for in the community | 391 (92%) | 276 (81%) | 28 (78%) | 304 (80%) |
| 3) Inmates who receive voc training are less likely to return to prison | 336 (79%) | 187 (54%) | 15 (43%) | 202 (53%) |
| 4) Inmates are likely to get a job in their trade | 300 (70%) | 252 (73%) | 28 (78%) | 280 (73%) |
| 5) The majority participating in voc programs receive enough training and experience | 327 (77%) | 274 (79%) | 25 (69%) | 299 (78%) |
| 6) The 'live work' aspect of voc training is important for developing skills | 417 (98%) | 335 (96%) | 35 (100%) | 370 (97%) |

** No. saying they somewhat agree or strongly agree. Percent based on total responses to each question.*



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This table shows that there was more difference of opinion for this question than the previous one. Inmates were more positive regarding the first and fourth statements than staff. Both statements dealt with inmates getting jobs when released. The first statement, "vocational training will help inmates get jobs in the community," shows 81% of staff agreeing, while 84% of inmates agreed. The fourth statement, "inmates are likely to get a job in their trade," shows 70% of staff agreeing, but 73% of inmates agreeing.

The second and third statements show the staff more positive than inmates. Ninety-two percent (92%) of the staff responded that vocational offerings are appropriate for the jobs inmates can apply for in the community, while 80% of inmates responded positively to this statement.

The largest difference in responses was in the third statement: "inmates who receive vocational training are less likely to return to prison." While 79% of the staff agreed with this statement, only a little over half (54%) of the male inmates agreed and only 43% of the female inmates agreed. Perhaps these responses reflect the uncertainty of students regarding their fate upon release. Responses may also be based on experiences of inmates who have returned after being released. In looking at the latest admission information for the surveyed inmates, 71% (270) of them were new court commitments while 29% (111) were in for a second term. In a breakdown of responses by type of admission for this statement, it was seen that 57% of the 270 new court commitment inmates answered that they agreed with statement #3. But only 41% of the returnees agreed with the statement.

The statement that both staff and inmates agreed with almost unanimously was the importance of "live work" for developing skills. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the staff agreed with this statement while 96% of the male inmates agreed and 100% of the female inmates agreed.

Despite their uncertainty regarding the job market, 82% of the students responded positively when asked *if they were planning to look for a job in the DOCS vocational trade that they had been trained in upon return to the community*. When asked *what kind of job they wanted*, 71% of those responding listed one of the vocations taught at DOCS; 11% said sales or business; 6% listed counselor or teacher; and 4% said they wanted to go to school.

The trades taught by DOCS that were mentioned most frequently as the kind of job they wanted were construction/carpentry (N=24), custodial maintenance (N=20), computer field (N=16), electrical trades (N=14), auto repair/auto body (N=14), food service/cook (N=13), building maintenance/superintendent (N=11), sheet metal fabrication/welding (N=9), printing (N=8), and small engine repair (N=8).

When asked if it was *likely they would get the kind of job they wanted*, 95% said it was very likely or somewhat likely (53% said 'very likely' and 42% said 'somewhat likely'). Only 5% thought it was not very likely. Table V shows the percentages in each category:

**Table V. How likely is it that you will get the kind of job you want when you return to the community?**

| Get kind of job you want | N=382 |
|---|---|
| Very likely | 53% |
| Somewhat likely | 42% |
| Not very likely | 5% |

Students were asked: *Are there other vocational trades which you would like to be trained in that have not been available to you?* Fifty-four percent (54%) said yes; 41% said no; 5% did not respond. Of those who said yes, Table VI shows the most frequent trades listed:

**Table VI. Other trades you would like to be trained in**

| Vocational Trade | Number of Responses |
|---|---|
| Computer Operator/Refurbishing | 35 |
| Welding | 23 |
| Auto Mechanics, Plumbing/Heating | 17 each |
| Auto Body | 14 |
| Radio/TV Repair | 12 |
| Commercial Arts | 12 |
| Air Conditioning/Refrig. | 11 |
| Carpentry/Woodworking | 10 |
| Optical Technology | 9 |
| Food Service, Small Engine Repair, General Business | 8 each |
| Electrical Trades, Masonry | 7 each |

When staff were asked *what other types of vocational training need to be offered,* their most frequent responses were: computer skills, automotive, painting, and welding.

Both staff and students were asked to list up to three *ways the vocational program could be improved.* Table VII lists the most frequent responses of students to this question.

**Table VII. In what ways can vocational training be improved to better serve your needs?**

| Student Responses | Number of times mentioned | Percent of responses |
|---|---|---|
| Updated equipment and materials | 92 | 23% |
| More classes, hours, not transferred out | 88 | 22% |
| More career oriented, hands on, contact w/employers | 79 | 20% |
| Does not need improvement | 74 | 19% |
| Better teaching skills, variety in assignments | 38 | 10% |
| Other: opp. to teach other inmates, voc jails like CASAT | 13 | 3% |
| Better inmate screening | 10 | 3% |
| TOTAL | 394 | 100% |

As shown above, students perceived that the most important need was the updating of materials and equipment. A significant proportion of inmates indicated that there should be an increase in the amount of computers and computer training available to inmates. They also saw a need to update teaching materials and equipment such as audio-visual aides and tools.

The second concern of students involved the need for more class time and a decrease of inmate transfers. Inmates indicated that they often were transferred out of their facilities before they had a chance to finish the specific trade they were learning, thus not being allowed to continue with the trade and earn job titles.

The third most frequently mentioned way to improve the program involved making it more career oriented. One student commented on ways the vocational program could be improved:

> *"Allow trade business people and union stewards to come into the facility to talk about their trade; what education skills and abilities are required; what type of employment opportunities are available and approximate compensation for entry level employees. This would provide students with valuable information, motivation and possible employment contacts. ...and businesses and unions with first hand information about the NYS DOC vocational education programs."*

Seventy-four students (19% of the responses) said the program does not need improvement.

Thirty-eight responses were related to the need for better teaching skills and more variety in assignments, listing qualities such as patience, as well as skills that indicate a mentoring relationship, e.g., increasing self-esteem, confidence, and motivation. Other comments included: more videos, more individual instruction, help with basic skills, a more businesslike atmosphere, and more responsibility for the student.

Table VIII lists the number and percentages of staff responses to this question.

**Table VIII. In what ways can vocational programming be improved to better serve the needs of its students?**

| Staff Responses | Number of times mentioned | Percent of responses |
|---|---|---|
| Update equipment and materials | 102 | 23% |
| Inmate Screening/placement | 83 | 19% |
| More community/live work | 54 | 12% |
| Job placement service/check community needs | 52 | 12% |
| Increase programming; more certificate programs | 41 | 9% |
| Instructor Training/communication | 37 | 8% |
| Decrease transfers | 27 | 6% |
| Increase recognition of students | 21 | 5% |
| Decrease class size | 18 | 4% |
| Other: feedback from Parole, more Bilingual materials | 12 | 3% |
| TOTAL | 447 | 101% |

Similar to inmate responses, 23% of instructor responses listed updated equipment and materials as the most needed improvement regarding the vocational program. Respondents stated that updated computers are needed, along with more programs designed to train inmates on computer programming, usage, and repair.

The next highest staff response related to better screening of inmates. Ten of the inmates surveyed also mentioned better screening as a way to improve the program.

There were many comments on the need for better screening of inmates, including:

- give instructors more freedom to remove students who do not want to be there
- increase academics of inmates

- put inmates in programs of interest to them
- prohibit use of voc as a dumping ground for inmates
- limit amount of times an inmate can re-enter a program after being removed

Fifty-four (54) staff respondents mentioned the need for more 'live work' programs; 52 said that a job placement service to place inmates into appropriate trades upon release is needed, to insure that inmates have the opportunity to utilize their training. Respondents also stated that the vocational program would benefit from classes designed to teach inmates appropriate job seeking and work skills. Most common responses included interview, resume writing, and job seeking skills. Other skills that staff saw a need for included learning responsibility, teamwork, and a work ethic.

An increase in programming and additional programs that include certification was mentioned 41 times by staff.

Instructor training and communication were concerns among instructors. Staff want more workshops and conferences so that they can learn up-to-date methods and have more opportunities to communicate with one another. They also want more computer training, more input into program development, and more recognition from Central Office.

Twenty-seven (27) staff respondents agreed with students that a decrease in inmate transfers is needed to insure that inmates receive the appropriate amount of training within their specific trade.

Other staff suggestions of ways to improve the program were:

- Inmates should pass a standardized test before program completion
- Decrease inmate 'callouts'
- More incentives and recognition for inmates
- All day enrollment
- Two-tier system: first basic, then advanced
- Vocational assessment shops to decrease turnover and better prepare students
- Give certificate without DOCS stamp

Students were asked about their *major concerns in finding employment when they leave*. They were able to list up to three responses. A total of 464 responses was categorized in the following table:

**Table IX. What are your major concerns about finding employment when you leave?**

| Concern: Student Responses | Number of Times Mentioned | Percent of Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Felony Record | 162 | 35% |
| Availability of Jobs | 99 | 21% |
| No Concerns | 58 | 13% |
| Attitude; Influence of Others | 46 | 10% |
| Having up-to-date Skills | 42 | 9% |
| Providing for Myself and Family | 40 | 9% |
| Interview Skills | 6 | 1% |
| Being on Parole | 6 | 1% |
| Transportation, Driver's license | 5 | 1% |
| TOTAL | 464 | 100% |

Not surprisingly, the major concern of students about finding employment is their felony record. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the responses involved some version of that concern. Following are excerpts from concerns listed:

> *Company hiring a convicted felon - gap in resume - prejudice toward exconvicts - discrimination as an exoffender and minority - exoffender status will cause employers to overlook or underestimate my abilities, motivation and desire to be a sincere and productive worker - absence from the work force - having employers honor the voc training I've received - being accepted in my field - respected as competent worker - people looking at me as a bad person because I was in prison - fair chance - community acceptance.*

The next largest concern was availability of jobs, mentioned 99 times. These students were concerned about finding a job in the field in which they were trained; competition; being able to pay their bills; and job security.

Other concerns were:

- 46 concerned about their own attitude and being influenced by others.
- 42 concerned with having up-to-date skills, certification, and experience.
- 40 concerned about providing for their families.

Other concerns were interview skills, transportation problems, and being on parole. Fifty-eight (58) students said they had no concerns.

We asked the students what had been *the most positive influences of prison experience*, and gave them the opportunity to list three responses. Table X lists responses to this question.

**Table X. What have been the most positive influences of your Prison experience?**

| Positive Influences: Student Responses | Number of Times Mentioned | Percent of Responses |
|---|---|---|
| Education Programs (vocational and academic) | 155 | 31% |
| Learning Personal Characteristics | 88 | 17% |
| Having good instructors, teachers, counselors | 76 | 15% |
| Counseling Programs | 60 | 12% |
| Broader view of world, seeing positive change | 41 | 8% |
| Spiritual enlightenment, time to think | 31 | 6% |
| Experience will keep me out of prison | 17 | 3% |
| Connections with family, children | 15 | 3% |
| All negative | 14 | 3% |
| Library, Gym, Music Room | 9 | 2% |
| TOTAL | 506 | 100% |

Vocational or academic programs were listed 155 times by students as being one of the most positive influences of their prison experience. Seventy-six (76) listed having a good instructor, counselor, or teacher. If we look at education in the broader sense, almost half (231 of 506=46%) of the responses involved the positive influence of teachers, instructors, vocational, and academic programs. Eighty-eight (88) responses involved the mention of personal characteristics they had learned while in prison as being a positive experience.

Inmates stated that learning good work habits and ethics, respect for others, teamwork, and responsibility were a part of their vocational and educational experience while in prison.

## V. Discussion of Findings

What are the implications of the findings of this survey? Perhaps it is safe to deduct from the survey that overall, the vocational program at DOCS is fulfilling its mission. While both vocational staff and students see ways that the program can be improved, the majority think that the training teaches productive job skills as well as the interpersonal skills needed to be successful in the work force.

In the area of employability of students there is more of an air of uncertainty. Though almost three-quarters of those surveyed agreed with the statements that students are being well prepared for the job market and are likely to get a job, there is a minority who doubt these statements. The greatest student uncertainty is shown in the statement that inmates who receive vocational training are less likely to return to prison. This response may reflect their knowledge of the many factors in addition to employment that influence an inmate's ability to succeed after prison. Almost half of the students expressed a concern that their felony record will be a hindrance in finding employment. This concern may have contributed to their uncertainty in this area. On the other hand, close to 80% of the staff agreed with the statement that students who receive vocational training are less likely to return.

The statement that emerged as having almost complete agreement of both staff and students was, "the 'live work' aspect of vocational training is important for developing skills." Their comments reflected the importance they attached to this aspect of vocational training. When asked how the vocational program could be improved, various aspects of hands-on work in order to provide more on-the-job training were the third highest response for both staff and students.

Training in the computer field was seen as an important need by both staff and students. Of students who responded with other vocational fields they would like to be trained in, the most frequent response was computer operator or computer refurbishing. The computer field was the second most popular after construction when asked what kind of job they hoped to get. The staff also pointed out the necessity of training for themselves in this new field.

## VI. Conclusion and Next Steps

The interest in computer vocations by both staff and students shows the need to continue the DOCS initiative of strengthening program in the areas of computer repair and computer literacy. Knowledge of various software programs such as word processing and spreadsheets, as well as the building of local area networks and computer programming, are all areas that were seen as valuable vocational skills. Staff as well as students see training in this field as a necessity for this program to move forward.

Over half of the inmate students listed at least one other trade that they wanted training in that was not available. Most of these trades are offered in various facilities, so the problem could have been a need for more sections of a shop at a particular facility, or other shops at that facility. Most facilities have vocational waiting lists, so inmates often are not able to be enrolled in the shop they request. This survey list of requested shops (Table VI), led by shops in the computer field, can assist administrators in planning future shops.

Surveyed students had been in their current shop for an average of eight months, with the median being five months. Only 53% of them reported earning one or more job titles in that shop. The subject of earned job titles is a complex area because of the large difference in various shops regarding level of difficulty. But the ability to earn job titles is directly related to having enough time to complete the tasks involved for each title. Since students listed the need for more class time and a decrease of transfers as their second highest concern on how the vocational program could be improved, an investigation of the issue of transfers before program completion may be in order. It would also be useful to get a better estimate from instructors of the average amount of time needed to earn titles for the various shops. With this information, expectations of earned job titles could be based on more realistic data.

The strong positive response to the statement regarding the importance of 'live work' for developing skills may point to the need for a review of this aspect of the vocational program. Is it being used to its fullest potential at all facilities? Is the 'live work' directly related to what the inmates are learning in their vocational shop? Do all students have the opportunity to participate in this aspect of the program? These are questions that could be addressed in a more thorough review of facility practices.

Finally, the uncertainty of students regarding their success in obtaining employment upon release demonstrates the need for more definitive followup studies of the employment records of inmates when released. Such studies could show both DOCS staff and students which vocational areas are most useful for successful employment of exoffenders. This data could be a valuable tool in planning for future vocational programs.

A quote from one of the surveyed students shows the importance of striving to continually improve the vocational program at DOCS:

> *I learned respect for human life... That freedom is a gift ... That I was able to get my GED and be trained in certain fields that will enable me in the future to not turn to crime again in life.*

The results of this survey will give program staff and researchers further direction to this end.

**Appendix A. Copy of staff and inmate surveys**

*Name:* _____ *Title:* _____ *Facility:* _____

# *Vocational Educational Study: Staff Survey*

*NYS Department of Correctional Services*
*1997*

*The following questions ask you about your perceptions of vocational education at the New York State Department of Correctional Services. Your answers can help the Department learn more about the actual workings of vocational programs in facilities, and help develop new ideas for improvements of these programs. Your answers are greatly appreciated. All responses will be kept confidential.*

(1) (a) How long have you been a vocational education instructor? _____ years
(b) How long have you been a vocational instructor at the current facility? _____ years

(2) (a) Which vocational subject(s) do you *currently* teach? _____
(b) Please list any other vocational subjects you have taught in the past.
_____

(3) In what ways do you feel vocational training helps inmates at DOCS? *(Circle answer)*

| *Vocational training ...* | *Doesn't Help* | *Helps a little* | *Helps Somewhat* | *Helps A lot* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) ...teaches technical skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (b) ...teaches job readiness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (c) .provides an opportunity for inmates to make use of their academic skills (e.g. math, reading, etc) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (d) ...helps build work skills (e.g. conscientiousness, work ethic, professionalism, pride in job, good work habits, punctuality, responsibility) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (e) ...builds interpersonal skills (e.g. communication skills, respect for co-workers, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (f) ...helps build self-esteem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (g) ...helps develop a cooperative spirit | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (h) Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) | | | | |
| _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

(4) How much do you disagree or agree with the following statements about vocational training at DOCS?

| | *Strongly Disagree* | *Slightly Disagree* | *Not Sure* | *Somewhat Agree* | *Strongly Agree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) Vocational training helps inmates get jobs in the community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (b) Current vocational offerings are appropriate for the types of jobs inmates can apply for once they are in the community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (c) Inmates who receive vocational training are less likely to return to prison | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (d) Inmates are likely to get a job in their trade. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (e) The majority of inmates participating in vocational programs receive enough training and experience to obtain a community job in a particular vocational trade. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (f) The "live work" aspect of vocational training is important for developing skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

(5) Are there other types of vocational training that you think need to be offered to inmates?

___ Yes ___ No

*(Please explain)*_____

_____

_____

(6) In what ways can vocational programming be improved to better serve the needs of its students?

_____

_____

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SURVEY.*

*(Return to Ann Brandon, DOCS Education Unit, Building 2, Albany, N.Y.)*

*DIN:* _____ *Facility:* _____

# *Vocational Educational Study: Inmate Survey*

*NYS Department of Correctional Services*
*1997*

The following questions ask you about your perceptions of vocational education in New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) facilities. Your answers can help DOCS learn more about the actual workings of vocational programs, and help develop new ideas for improvements of these programs. Your answers are greatly appreciated. All responses will be kept confidential.

(1) (a) Which vocational program are you *currently* participating in? _____
(b) How many job titles have you earned in this vocational program? _____
(c) How long have you been in this program? (months) _____
(d) Are you a student _____, aide _____, or clerk _____?

(2) (a) Please check off from the list below the vocational trades you have had training in while at DOCS.
(b) Indicate the number of titles you have earned in each trade.
(c) Also, indicate if you have had additional training in a particular vocational area other than from DOCS.

| *Some* | *A Lot* | (a) *Vocational Trade* | (b) *# of Earned Titles* | (c) *Prior Training Outside of DOCS* | | *None* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| _____ | | Agriculture/Horticulture | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Air Cond./Refrigeration | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Appliance Repair | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Auto Body | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Auto Mechanics | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Auto Transmission | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Barbering/Beauty Culture | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Building Maintenance | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Cabinet Making | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Carpentry | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Commercial Arts | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Computer Operator | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Computer Refurbishing | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Cosmetology | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | CSET / TV | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Custodial Maintenance | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Data Processing | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Dental Technician | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Diesel | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Drafting | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Electrical Trades | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Electronics Repair | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Floor Covering | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Food Service | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | General Business | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | | Horse Handling & Care | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |

| (a) *Vocational Trade* | (b) *# of Earned Titles* | (c) *Prior Training Outside of DOCS* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *None* | *Some* | *A Lot* |
| _____ Laundry | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Machine Shop | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Masonry | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Office Machine Repair | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Oil Burner Repair | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Optical Technician | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Painting | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Plumbing & Heating | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Printing | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Radio/TV Repair | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Sewing Machine Repair | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Sheet Metal Fabrication | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Shoe Repair | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Small Engine Repair | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Tailoring and Sewing | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Upholstery | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ Welding | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| *Industries Program(s) (Specify)* | | | | |
| _____ | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| *Other Programs not mentioned: (Specify)* | | | | |
| _____ | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| _____ | _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 |

(3) (a) Are there other vocational trades which you would like to be trained in that have not been available to you? ____ Yes ____ No

(b) *(If YES)* Which programs are these? _____

_____

(4) In what ways do you feel vocational training is helpful to you? *(Circle answer)*

| *Vocational training ...* | *Doesn't Help* | *Helps a little* | *Helps Somewhat* | *Helps A lot* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) ...teaches technical skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (b) ...teaches job readiness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (c) ...provides an opportunity to make use of my academic skills (e.g. math, reading, etc) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

| *Vocational training ...* | *Doesn't Help* | *Helps a little* | *Helps Somewhat* | *Helps A lot* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (d) ...helps build work skills (e.g. conscientiousness, work ethic, professionalism, pride in job, good work habits, punctuality, responsibility) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (e) ...builds interpersonal skills (e.g. communication skills, respect for co-workers, etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (f) ...helps build self-esteem | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (g) ...helps develop a cooperative spirit | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| (h) Other: _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

(5) How much do you disagree or agree with the following statements about vocational training at DOCS?

| | *Strongly Disagree* | *Slightly Disagree* | *Not Sure* | *Somewhat Agree* | *Strongly Agree* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (a) Vocational training will help inmates get jobs in the community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (b) Current vocational offerings are appropriate for the types of jobs inmates can apply for once in the community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (c) Inmates who receive vocational training are less likely to return to prison. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (d) Inmates are likely to get a job in their trade. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (e) The majority of inmates participating in vocational programs receive enough training and experience to obtain a community job in a particular vocational trade. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (f) The "live work" aspect of vocational training is important for developing skills. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

(6) (a) Do you plan to look for a job in the DOCS vocational trade that you have been trained in when you return to the community? ___ Yes ___ No

(6)(b) *(If NO)* What kind of job would you like to get when you return to the community?

_____

(c) How likely is it that you will get the kind of job you want when you return to the community?

1 Not Very Likely
2 Somewhat Likely
3 Very Likely

(7) What are your major concerns about finding employment when you leave?

_____

_____

_____

(8) In what ways can vocational training be improved to better serve your needs?

_____

_____

_____

(9) What have been the most positive influences of your prison experience?

_____

_____

_____

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS SURVEY.*

## Appendix B. Survey Responses

| | Surveys Sent | | | | Surveys Returned | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Facility (f)=female | Sups. | Instructors | Students | Total | Sups. | Instructors | Students | Total |
| Adirondack | 1 | 8 | 15 | 24 | 1 | 8 | 11 | 20 |
| Albion (f) | 1 | 7 | 24 | 32 | 1 | 4 | 18 | 23 |
| Altona | 1 | 10 | 5 | 16 | 1 | 10 | 5 | 16 |
| Arthurkill | 1 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| Attica | 1 | 8 | 6 | 15 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 8 |
| Auburn | 1 | 8 | 2 | 11 | 1 | 7 | | 8 |
| Bare Hill | 1 | 16 | 21 | 38 | 1 | 14 | 20 | 35 |
| Bayview (f) | | 1 | 3 | 4 | | 1 | 3 | 4 |
| Beacon (f) | 1 | 1 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 8 |
| Bedford Hills (f) | 1 | 5 | 13 | 19 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 15 |
| Camp Gabriels | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Camp Georgetown | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Camp Pharsalia | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Cape Vincent | 1 | 10 | 13 | 24 | 1 | 10 | 13 | 24 |
| Cayuga | 1 | 14 | 23 | 38 | 1 | 12 | 15 | 28 |
| Clintons | 1 | 11 | 9 | 21 | 1 | 11 | 4 | 16 |
| Collins | 1 | 12 | 12 | 25 | 1 | 10 | 11 | 22 |
| Coxsackie | 1 | 9 | 6 | 16 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 15 |
| Downstate | | 1 | 0 | 1 | | | | 0 |
| Eastern | 1 | 7 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 4 | | 5 |
| Elmira | 1 | 10 | 4 | 15 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 12 |
| Fishkill | 1 | 10 | 5 | 16 | 1 | 10 | 5 | 16 |
| Franklin | 1 | 18 | 18 | 37 | 1 | 17 | 14 | 32 |
| Green Haven | 1 | 10 | 2 | 13 | 1 | 11 | 2 | 14 |
| Great Meadow | 1 | 7 | 5 | 13 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 10 |
| Gouveneur | 1 | 10 | 12 | 23 | 1 | 7 | 10 | 18 |
| Gowanda | 1 | 14 | 7 | 22 | 1 | 10 | 7 | 18 |
| Greene | 1 | 18 | 23 | 42 | 1 | 12 | 19 | 32 |
| Groveland | 1 | 19 | 28 | 48 | 1 | 16 | 24 | 41 |
| Hudson | 1 | 4 | 8 | 13 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 12 |
| Lakeview | 1 | 7 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 8 |
| Livingston | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 7 |
| Lyon Mt. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Marcy | 1 | 12 | 15 | 28 | 1 | 11 | 13 | 25 |
| Mt. McGregor | 1 | 5 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 6 |
| Midstate | | 12 | 15 | 27 | | 12 | 15 | 27 |
| Midorange | 1 | 7 | 5 | 13 | | 5 | 5 | 10 |
| Mohawk | 1 | 7 | 9 | 17 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 16 |
| Ogdensburg | 1 | 13 | 25 | 39 | 1 | 12 | 23 | 36 |
| Oneida | 1 | 8 | 6 | 15 | 1 | 6 | 6 | 13 |
| Orleans | 1 | 17 | 24 | 42 | 1 | 16 | 21 | 38 |
| Otisville | 1 | 6 | 6 | 13 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 10 |
| Riverview | 1 | 15 | 21 | 37 | 1 | 15 | 18 | 34 |
| Shawangunk | 1 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 9 |
| Sing Sing | 1 | 7 | 3 | 11 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 9 |
| Sullivan | 1 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| Taconic (f) | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Wallkill | 1 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 8 |
| Washington | 1 | 14 | 15 | 30 | 1 | 12 | 10 | 23 |
| Watertown | 1 | 8 | 11 | 20 | 1 | 7 | 10 | 18 |
| Wende | | 2 | 0 | 2 | | | | 0 |
| Woodbourne | 1 | 10 | 6 | 17 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 12 |
| Wyoming | 1 | 18 | 20 | 39 | | 17 | 13 | 30 |
| TOTAL | 49 | 438 | 475 | 962 | 47 | 383 | 389 | 819 |

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## Appendix C. Number of Student Respondents by Trade Area

| TRADE AREA | MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS |
|---|---|---|---|
| Custodial Maintenance | 53 | 2 | 55 |
| Horticulture/Agricultural | 26 | 10 | 36 |
| Building Maintenance | 31 | 2 | 33 |
| Electrical Trades | 28 | 4 | 32 |
| Small Engine Repair | 32 | | 32 |
| General Business | 22 | 9 | 31 |
| Printing | 23 | 4 | 27 |
| Masonry | 18 | | 18 |
| Welding | 17 | | 17 |
| Floor Covering | 14 | | 14 |
| Drafting | 12 | | 12 |
| Air Conditioning/Refrig. | 12 | | 12 |
| Commercial Arts | 8 | | 8 |
| Computer Operator | 8 | | 8 |
| Computer Refurbishing | 8 | | 8 |
| Plumbing/Heating | 7 | | 7 |
| Barber and Beauty | 6 | | 6 |
| Cosmetology | | 6 | 6 |
| Electronic Repair | 5 | | 5 |
| Radio/T.V. Repair | 4 | | 4 |
| Auto Body | 3 | | 3 |
| Carpentry/Woodwork | 3 | | 3 |
| Food Service | 3 | | 3 |
| Appliance Repair | 3 | | 3 |
| Auto Mechanics | 1 | | 1 |
| Office Machine Repair | 1 | | 1 |
| Painting | 1 | | 1 |
| Upholstery | 1 | | 1 |
| Pre-Voc. Shop Gen. | 1 | | 1 |
| Horse Farm | 1 | | 1 |
| TOTAL | 352 | 37 | 389 |



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## Appendix D. Number of Instructors by Trade Area

| TRADE AREA | NUMBER OF INSTRUCTORS |
|---|---|
| Building Maintenance | 42 |
| Custodial Maintenance | 40 |
| Electrical Trades | 30 |
| Small Engine Repair | 28 |
| General Business | 28 |
| Horticulture/Agricultural | 27 |
| Welding | 24 |
| Floor Covering | 20 |
| Masonry | 18 |
| Printing | 17 |
| Drafting | 12 |
| Computer Refurbishing | 12 |
| Plumbing/Heating | 10 |
| Air Conditioning/Refrig. | 9 |
| Barber and Beauty | 7 |
| Commercial Arts | 7 |
| Auto Mechanics | 5 |
| Cabinet/Millwork | 5 |
| Electronic Repair | 5 |
| Radio/T.V. Repair | 4 |
| Food Service | 4 |
| Upholstery | 4 |
| Auto Body | 3 |
| Appliance Repair | 3 |
| Computer Operator | 3 |
| Carpentry/Woodwork | 2 |
| Cosmetology | 2 |
| Pre-Voc, Shop Gen. | 2 |
| Machine Shop | 1 |
| Painting | 1 |
| Tailor & Sewing | 1 |
| Mechanic Drawing | 1 |
| Sheltered Workshop | 1 |
| Horse Farm | 1 |
| TOTAL | 379 |



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**APPENDIX E. Number of Job Titles Earned in Current Shop**

| No. of Titles Earned | Male | Female | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 51 | 8 | 59 |
| 2 | 49 | 2 | 51 |
| 3 | 32 | 2 | 34 |
| 4 | 22 | | 22 |
| 5 | 14 | | 14 |
| 6 | 13 | 2 | 15 |
| 7 | 6 | | 6 |
| 8 | 6 | | 6 |
| 9+ | | 1 | 1 |
| None | 159 | 22 | 181 |
| TOTAL STUDENTS | 352 | 37 | 389 |

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*September 1998*